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NEWS RELEASE

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April 5, 1999

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U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SPEAKS AT UM APRIL 13

MISSOULA --

U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas will visit The University of Montana Tuesday, April 13, to deliver a public talk as part of a prestigious lecture series sponsored by the School of Law.

Thomas will discuss "Judicial Independence" during a 2 p.m. lecture at the University Theatre. His talk is the second installment of the Judge William B. Jones and Judge Edward A. Tamm Judicial Lecture Series. Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Thomas' colleague on the nation's highest court, gave the inaugural speech in September 1997. O'Connor is a member of the lecture series' advisory committee.

The justice's visit next week coincides with the law school's annual observance of Law Week on campus, which begins Monday, April 12, with the Montana Supreme Court hearing a case in the University Theatre. Thomas also will appear in several law classes Tuesday, law Dean E. Edwin Eck said.

"I am pleased that Justice Clarence Thomas will visit our law school," Eck said. "It's not every day that an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States is in your classroom."

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The Judge Jones- Judge Tamm lecture series was conceived in 1997 by Robert S. Bennett, a prominent Washington, D.C., attorney with a summer home near Livingston. Bennett, a member of the UM law school's board of visitors, wanted to memorialize the two distinguished Washington, D.C., jurists who had Montana roots. Bennett led the fund-raising effort to establish the lecture series, which is designed to enhance understanding of the judicial system for law students, faculty and practicing lawyers. The series brings leading jurists and scholars to the law school to discuss topics ranging from judicial ethics to judicial decision-making.

Tamm and Jones served as trial judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Tamm, who attended high school in Butte and college at both UM and Carroll College, also sat on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Jones practiced law in Helena from 1931 to 1937 and served two of those years as a special assistant attorney general.

Thomas was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by President George Bush in October 1991. He held a variety of appointments before rising to the U.S. Supreme Court. Like Judge Tamm, Thomas served as a judge for the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

A graduate of Yale Law School, Thomas served as Missouri assistant attorney general from 1974 to 1977, legislative assistant to Sen. John Danforth from 1979 to 1981, assistant secretary for civil rights in the U.S. Department of Education during 1981-82 and chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from 1982 to 1990.

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